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NOTE ON WARD'S "PURE SOCIOLOGY."

IN accordance with the author's own suggestion (pp. 12, 13), this journal will, from time to time, discuss at some length important positions in Dr. Ward's recent book, *Pure Sociology*. Not because it is a vital matter, but because it is certainly worth consideration, we may well begin by pointing out an anomaly in the title and the description of the scope of the work.

Ward's alternative title is: "A Treatise on the Origin and Spontaneous Development of Society." This choice of subject-matter corresponds with his statement (Preface, p. viii): "I . . . must regard all social phenomena (*sic*) as pure which are unaffected by the purposeful efforts of man and of society itself."

It seems to me that Ward has been betrayed into a fallacious association of ideas. He has not preserved a clear distinction between phenomena, on the one hand, and scientific study of phenomena on the other. Use of different terms may break the force of the misleading association. Suppose we say: All phenomena of human association are of two kinds: (*a*) unconscious, (*b*) conscious. What Ward defines as the sphere of pure sociology is identical with the former class. What he actually treats belongs to both. The classification of phenomena into conscious and unconscious is a classification of a quite distinct order, and on an entirely different principle from that which divides sciences into pure and applied. The one classification rests on differences in the subject-matter; the other, on differences in the method of dealing with the subject-matter. The pure sciences are explicative only. The applied sciences are constructive. Pure logic, for example, is not confined to analysis of the mental processes of savages or children who do not know that they are reasoning; and pure mathematics does not stop with the conclusions of minds which were not aware that they were calculating. Otherwise, we could not include Euclid in pure mathematics, nor Aristotle and Hegel in pure logic.

Ward has confused socialization and sociology. Socialization is both conscious and unconscious, but sociology is thought about socialization, and is necessarily conscious—if we may except such cases of absent-mindedness as Ward must be accused of in this instance. Nobody understands this distinction better than he, and his colleagues must be forgiven for regarding it as a good joke that he could permit himself to trip on such an obvious snag. Sociology is just as pure when it is explaining the connection between conscious social actions as when it is doing the same work upon the unconscious. If we were to take Ward at his word, none of Tarde's books would be pure sociology, none of Giddings's, nor Ross's *Social Control*, nor even this, his own volume, *Pure Sociology*. Each of these books treats both of unconscious and of conscious socialization. To know "the phenomena and laws of society as it is," and to reach explanations of the processes by which social phenomena take place (p. 4), it is not less necessary to study the phenomena of the most conscious societies of today than to sift ethnological evidence about primitive peoples. It is just as pure sociology to get at the explanation of a panic in Wall street, or a change of the diplomatic situation in Europe, or a shifting of the political attitude of American trade-unions, or a variation in popular religious ideas in the United States, or the attempts to develop a science of sociology, in distinction from attempts to reform society, as it is to interpret the actions of savages who never had a thought of their own. It seems to me that Ward's treatment, in spite of his definition, recognizes this principle, and I find no way to reconcile the scope of his treatment with his definition of pure sociology. If he held, rigidly, to his definition, he would leave out the vast mass of conscious social actions the best part of "achievement" as he defines it in chap. iii, which certainly requires explanation no less than the unconscious. As he claims that sociology falls into the two parts, pure and applied, the latter of which is telic rather than explicative, explanation of conscious social actions would in that case be left in a limbo which sociology does not penetrate.

It is no answer to cite the notorious fact that most social

action, even today, is, in a sense, socially unconscious (*vide* p. 20); for instance, the men who are at this moment conducting the municipal campaign in New York know very well what they want, individually and as organizations, but, in the mind of most of them, there is relatively little conception of the bearings which their respective plans have upon the structure and functions of American society. Yet, whether we credit these men with much or little social consciousness, their actions are at least as much subject-matter for sociological explanation as the actions of men on any lower mental and social plane. There are also social actions which are unquestionably conscious, which certainly are not to be classified as applied sociology when the social psychologist, for example, undertakes to explain their genetic relations. These, however, according to Ward's definition, do not fall within the scope of pure sociology. In order not to do him injustice, I must repeat that his practice does not seem to conform to his definition, and that his real intention would certainly make his pure science of society cover explanation of the whole body of phenomena that occur in the course of "achievement."

Between his definition and his practice, however, Ward seems to be in a dilemma. If he should say that the actions of our contemporaries are subject-matter for pure sociology because they are socially unconscious, why for his present purpose should he classify social phenomena into conscious and unconscious at all? It is the difference between the explicative and the telic attitude of mind which his divisions of pure and applied sociology actually respect. There would remain for the conscious group only those actions which deliberately set before themselves some modification of society, and we might agree that all theorizings to such ends are theorizings which constitute applied sociology. But, to Ward himself, such theorizings are social phenomena requiring explanation just as really as the actions of savage people. Under his definition, however, he has no liberty to deal with them, in pure sociology. According to his formulas, Comte writing *The Positive Philosophy*, or Carl Marx agitating for a reconstruction of society, or himself publishing *Dynamic Sociology*,

would be equally outside the view of pure sociology, because those actions are all conscious. In fact, they call for explanation no less than the actions of nature-men performing merely their instinctive motions. In practice, as we have said, Ward lifts his ban from conscious actions. This is shown at once by chap. iii, on the subject-matter of sociology. When Ward brings in the actions of our contemporaries for explanation, knowing them to be at least partially conscious, he throws away his limitations of pure sociology. The truth is that the unconscious and the conscious are subdivisions of the subject-matter of pure sociology; they are not lines of separation between pure and applied sociology.

Ward might have said: Pure sociology is distinguished by the purpose of explaining socialization at all stages: applied sociology is distinguished by the purpose of modifying socialization. That would not only have been self-consistent, as a principle of differentiation, but it would have corresponded with the actual contents of his system.

I can think of no sociologist who has ever consistently confined himself to the study of unconscious socialization. I can see no good reason why anyone should want to. The attempt to do so would be an abortion, if it succeeded. Unconscious and conscious socialization help to explain each other. Held apart from each other, both would be misunderstood.

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